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Mr. & Mrs. Peter A. Lamb
65 Calvin French Road
Sterling, CT 06377

March 15, 2007

Dear Legislators,

We are asking you to pass a bill that will allow our local probate courts to change the age of children adopted from foreign countries. As the parents of six adopted children from Asia, it has become more and more clear to us that there are grave issues regarding the birth dates given to children adopted past infancy. When an abandoned child is brought to the orphanage an administrator estimates the child's age and creates a "birth certificate". Foreign countries that limit the age at which a child can be adopted will often make an abandoned older child younger than their actual age, thereby giving the child more years to be considered adoptable. And to the contrary, institutional delays will render a child much younger than their actual age. More often than not, once the child has been adopted and brought to the U.S. the new parents learn through evaluations from their physicians, dentists and teachers that their children's ages can be off by one to four years in either direction.

When arriving in China in 2001 to adopt our supposedly nine year old son, we were met by a child the size of a small 5 year old with the developmental ability of a three year old. Yet we were handed a "birth certificate" that stated he was nine years old! The effects of living in an institution for so long has compromised so many things for our son: development, education, peer relations, and self-esteem to name a few. Our son who will supposedly turn fifteen years old in May tells his fellow fifth graders that he is eleven years old.

The educational impact of an incorrectly aged child is huge. Academic evaluations are based on the age stated on a child's birth certificate. Therefore, my fifth grader could be evaluated as a high school freshman, my high school freshman as a junior, and the school system could place my four year old in first grade due to the incorrect date on his birth certificate. A 'domino effect' is created: incorrect age leads to frustration and behavioral problems, the wrong evaluations lead to children not receiving age appropriate education or services, which ultimately compromises the outcome of the school's standing in the ubiquitous Connecticut Mastery Tests... "No Child Left Behind"? ... There is no doubt in our minds that our children are, indeed, being 'left behind'.... far behind.

Incorrectly aged children also face social and emotional issues as well. Post-institutionalized children are vastly more immature than their peers; putting them in a classroom with like-aged children is social suicide. With all the emphasis now being put on self-esteem, an incorrectly aged child can evoke irreversible damage to their psyche, leaving them with lifelong feelings of inadequacy.

We finalized the adoption of our last child just last week and again were faced with the frustration of not being able to change his birth year. He has been evaluated by his teachers, dentists and physician who all state that physically, mentally and developmentally he is unequivocally four years old. As the law now stands we were forced to accept a birth date stating that our son is two years older than the professionals say he is.

On behalf of the foreign born adopted children in Connecticut we beg the legislature to enact a *retroactive* bill that will allow our local Probate Court Judges to change the age of any child adopted from a foreign country regardless of how long ago the adoption took place. This is an injustice that could be remedied with the stroke of a pen.

We thank you,

Denise and Peter Lamb